

## STRATEGIC FRAMING OF STABILITY OPERATIONS

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**STRATEGIC FRAMING OF STABILITY OPERATIONS**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This paper establishes the strategic factors which must be considered for strategic framing of stability operations by analyzing the strategic aspects of counterinsurgency theory and doctrine, a subset of stability operations. Controlling these strategic factors with the U.S. Government's instruments of power - diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence and law enforcement - set the conditions with other nations and groups external to the fragile state to help ensure successful stability operations.





## STRATEGIC FRAMING OF STABILITY OPERATIONS

Strategic framing of stability operations is the application of the U.S. Government's instruments of national power to establish the conditions external to a fragile state<sup>1</sup> which facilitate conducting stability operations in the fragile state and accomplishing U.S. political objectives. In order to set these conditions, the U.S. Government must engage the other nations – friend or foe – in the region and beyond the region to gain support for - or to prevent spoilers from interfering with - the stability operation during the assessment and planning phases. Theater strategic level planning of stability operations will take place within this strategic framework. The operational level players - Combatant Commands, the State Department regional bureaus, the U.S. Embassies and the field offices of other executive departments - will plan and operate within this framework. Admiral Fallon, the former commander of Central Command, noted the need to strategically frame Operation Iraqi Freedom when he said,

... as the guy in charge of the region I can't solve Iraq just from working the inside. That's General Petraeus's game. He is my commander working inside Iraq. But I have to do something about the neighborhood and the idea that we were going to ignore Iran and Syria, for example, and just focus on Iraq was ridiculous.<sup>2</sup>

Conflict or instability in a state or region provides neighboring states and international organizations an opportunity to adversely impact or shape the institutions, government and policies of a fragile state. In Vietnam, the North Vietnamese created an organization in South Vietnam called the National Liberation Front (NLF) from various religious and minority groups alienated by the South Vietnamese government. The purpose of the NLF was to, "... build a political and military base for guerrilla war and exploit the unrest resulting from Diem's inept governance...."<sup>3</sup> North Vietnam directed

the NLF and members of the Vietnam Workers' Party and South Vietnamese trained in the north operated the NLF in South Vietnam. The application of strategic framing helps set conditions by protecting it from external influences, which will assist stability operations to accomplish U.S. objectives. Stability operations, when properly conducted, can prevent or reduce the susceptibility of a fragile state from falling into insurgency, terrorism, or guerrilla warfare. Stability operations which strengthen a fragile state

...create and maintain a safe, secure environment or reduce the grievances of the general populace can certainly impact the calculations of the antagonists wanting to unseat the friendly government through violent means.<sup>4</sup>

While strategic framing is external to the fragile state and the stability operation conducted in it, this influences the success or failure of stability. Dr. David Kilcullen notes that success in counterinsurgency operations, which are part of stability operations, includes developing and implementing strategic level political solutions in conjunction with operational and tactical level operations. Counterinsurgencies were unsuccessful "... often because of interference by external actors who could not be effectively dealt with. Under these circumstances, the best that security forces could achieve was to contain the insurgency indefinitely."<sup>5</sup> Unsuccessful strategic framing of stability operations may require greater effort for a longer time period from all nations involved, as we have seen in Afghanistan and Iraq. Establishing a framework around the problem is even more significant in a small regional conflict or a conflict in a single nation where its neighbors are relatively strong, stable and influential. In Iraq we see a stable Iran applying external influence on the political processes of Iraq as it continues to gain national strength with support from the coalition forces. In Afghanistan we

continue to see political influence applied by Pakistan to shape the political institutions. As demonstrated by Iraq and Afghanistan, failure to properly frame the fragile state endangers stability operations and opens opportunities to the opponents of our policy.

The U.S. Government must gain support and participation for the many requirements of stabilizing a fragile state and assist its introduction or return to being a functioning state operating on the world stage. Strategic framing is based on the U.S. Government's policy toward individual states, regional policies, the foreign policy, and our national security policy and supports obtaining the national strategic end state. Strategic framing requires diplomacy and engagement by all the executive departments, led and coordinated by the Department of State, to make arrangements, agreements and set conditions with nations surrounding the fragile state which are beneficial to our policies. Strategic framing is a significant part of ensuring the long-term success of the stability operation and the fragile state. Strategic framing is not internal coordination of the U.S. Government or planning of the stability operation. Strategic framing, based on U.S. policy, sets favorable conditions to conduct stability operations and can positively impact the future of the fragile state by protecting it from external threats and building positive relations with supportive countries, facilitating its introduction or return to the world stage as a contributing nation.

Much of the strategic level thought about stability operations and counter-insurgency focuses on the internal workings of the government to better coordinate the U.S. Government's efforts in the interagency arena. There is a dearth of information about what the U.S. Government should do and the factors it should use to set conditions *around* a fragile state to ensure stability operations meet U.S. national

strategic objectives. The purpose of this paper is to develop the concept of strategic framing of stability operations by identifying strategic factors and how the U.S. Government can control them. It starts with a discussion of the importance of stability operations and counterinsurgency as a part of stability operations. Then, using counterinsurgency theory as a basis, it develops enduring strategic factors to consider for framing a fragile state, and then uses the instruments of power as a method for attempting to control the strategic factors. While strategic framing applies to offensive, defensive and stability operations, I chose stability operations as the focus of this paper in light of the complexity and the long term importance of stability operations, as well as the problems encountered in Afghanistan and Iraq after successful offensive operations.

#### Fragile States, Stability Operations and Strategic Framing

The decision to commit U.S. resources to an operation in a fragile state is made at the highest level and therefore must include a whole-of-government effort to frame the fragile state in order to set favorable conditions for a stability operation. These favorable conditions can positively impact the future of a fragile state by protecting it from external threats and building positive relations with supportive countries.

Strategic framing helps to bring order and clarify a complex mixture of state and non-state actors and their wide range of interests regarding a fragile state. A fragile state by itself is a complex problem as indicated by FM 3-07.

The term fragile state refers to the broad spectrum of failed, failing, and recovering states. The distinction among them is rarely clear, as fragile states do not travel a predictable path to failure or recovery. The difference between a recovering and failed state may be minimal, as the underlying conditions, such as insurgency or famine, may drive a state to collapse in a relatively short period.<sup>6</sup>

Add to this the complexity of stability operations which is an overarching concept of operations – more encompassing than insurgency or counterinsurgency – which take place inside a fragile state. Stability operations range from preventing conflict or civil strife to helping a fragile state in conflict or one which has undergone a crisis such as a natural disaster. Joint Publications 1-02 and 3-0, and Army field manual FM 3-07 define *Stability Operations* as

An overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.<sup>7</sup>

The overarching concept and definition are useful since they cover the military aspects of the Department of Defense (DOD) mission (called *Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Operations*) and the civilian aspects of the Department of State (DOS) mission (called *Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations*). Field Manual 3-07, *Stability Operations* also recognizes the importance of the other instruments of power inside a fragile state, emphasizing that

...many of the tasks executed in a stability operation are best performed by host-nation, foreign, or USG civilian personnel, with military forces providing support as required. However, [DOD Directive Number 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations*] clearly states that, in the event civilians are not prepared to perform those tasks, military forces will assume that responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

Stability operations are an “ill-structured problem,” a complex problem which has no fixed set of potential solutions. It is a problem not defined by right or wrong, but on a spectrum from better to worse when compared to the strategic objectives.<sup>9</sup>

Strategic framing can help bring order from these complexities – relations amongst international actors, interagency coordination, planning and executing stability

operations and dealing with the issues of a fragile state. This can reduce the uncertainties of this wide range of possibilities in assessing, planning and conducting stability operations and by protecting and facilitating the fragile state's emergence from crisis by establishing systems and institutions which will benefit its future development. Additionally, stability operations have the potential to prevent insurgency and civil war by assisting the government of a fragile state to maintain a secure environment and providing essential services, reducing or eliminating the need for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations.

#### Determining Strategic Framing Factors from Counterinsurgency's Strategic Concepts

The factors which strategic framing must consider develop out of counterinsurgency and stability operations theory and doctrine. Stability operations and counterinsurgency are closely linked as noted by the stability operations Joint Operating Concept.

If this situation [the stability operation] includes the presence of armed insurgent forces, actively opposing the efforts of the existing or new host government, then this operation is a counterinsurgency (COIN) operation.<sup>10</sup>

Counterinsurgency is part of the larger concept of stability operations and counterinsurgency's strategic concepts can be applied to stability operations and strategic framing of stability operations. This is important because there is more strategic level doctrine, theory and thinking for counterinsurgency than for stability operations. This strategic level information is applicable to developing the factors which must be considered for framing a stability operation. These 'strategic factors' consist of the subcategories 'strategic conditions' and 'external support'.

David Galula, in his book *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*, discusses two factors, “Geographic Conditions” and “Outside Support” which can benefit either the insurgent or the counterinsurgent. These two concepts include factors applicable to the strategic level. From his “Geographic Conditions”<sup>11</sup> we can identify international borders, population, and economy as strategic conditions that impact strategic framing. Additionally, Dr. Kilcullen notes the importance of sanctuary. The final point for framing stability operations is culture.

*Strategic Conditions which must be taken into Account.* International borders with nations sympathetic to opposition groups, such as Pakistan to Afghanistan and Iran to Iraq, can permit infiltration of external support as well as the potential benefit of sanctuary to opposition groups. Land borders require more personnel and effort to control, benefitting the opposition, not the government of the fragile state. The Rand study, *Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations* hits on a key issue typical of fragile states. It notes the land border between India and Jammu and Kashmir, in existence since 1947 “... is still too porous; Indian security forces are simply unable to guard the entire stretch of the Line of Control from infiltration.”<sup>12</sup> More coastline benefits the government of a fragile state since maritime assets can control access with technical means and fewer personnel.<sup>13</sup> The Rand study notes that the isolation of the Philippine Islands and the implementation of a naval blockade “... made it difficult for the insurgents to coordinate actions among themselves”<sup>14</sup> and “... if the Revolutionary Army had had a major outside supporter (which it did not), it would have been difficult to get support onto the islands....”<sup>15</sup>

The geographic condition of population has multiple aspects to consider in strategic framing. Galula focused on larger or rural populations as being more difficult to control. A different view of the population factor that impacts strategic framing is that of a significant ethnic or religious population (or both) that crosses international borders. Ethnic groups, such as Pashtuns or Kurds, or religious groups, such as Shia, can present significant issues if they oppose the stability operation or the government. These groups straddling a border can allow external support (discussed later) to reach opposition groups in the fragile state, which provides external influence to shape fragile state's political structures. These groups are strategic issues which must be carefully handled with a fragile state's government, coalition partners and the government on the other side of the border – all above the level of the operational commander.

Population considerations also include essential services, Humanitarian Assistance, and displacement of the population. While providing essential services is an issue internal to a stability operation, coordinating support and implementing the capacity for these services is an external issue. Coalition partners and allies must understand the current level of services in the fragile state in order to be prepared to provide a similar level. In Operation Iraqi Freedom,

...intelligence focused on potential war damage to the [electrical] system, not on the dilapidation of the power plants and generators – comprised of a hodgepodge of parts from Europe and Asia – that had suffered as a result of more than a decade of economic sanctions and inadequate investment.<sup>16</sup>

Inadequate preparation and failing to provide the level of services the fragile state's population is accustomed to will undermine the execution of the stability operation.



Humanitarian Assistance such as medical assistance, food and water and management of displaced persons may be required in a stability operation, because these are factors which will impact the population's support of the fragile government.

Galula also identifies a well-developed economy as being more susceptible to terrorism than an underdeveloped economy. In today's globalized world, the economy is more closely tied to increases or decreases in other economies as well as political changes. Terrorist acts today can send shockwaves through the globalized economic system of developed economies which have significant impacts on fragile state economies. Economic aspects are more complicated today than when Galula identified this, requiring a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness and the required policies to successfully operate an economy.

Dr. David Kilcullen notes that sanctuary is a key part of counterinsurgency and it is a condition applicable to strategic framing.<sup>17</sup> Sanctuary generally provides a safe location for external support to reach the opposition or insurgent groups. Sanctuary can be a geographic location in another nation bordering the fragile state, such as North Vietnam using Cambodia; it can be a geographic location inside a fragile state as seen in Afghanistan in the Helmand; sanctuary can be an ethnic or religious group inside a fragile state, especially if that group crosses international borders such as the Pashtuns in Afghanistan or the Kurds in Iraq. Sanctuary can also be 'virtual' in today's globalized world.

...contemporary insurgencies are often supported or driven by transnational networks with access to satellite communications, the Internet, global media and transnational banking systems. International support may be leveraged from diaspora or émigré communities, international institutions, friendly foreign governments and populations, or the international media.<sup>18</sup>

The ability to connect to people around the world through multiple communications systems – cellular telephones, internet, etc. – from a private home presents a very difficult situation to control when attempting to frame stability operations.

Sanctuary can allow opposition groups to conduct strategic and operational level planning and coordination, providing a safe location to think, plan, coordinate and act in the longer term. Sanctuary provides a place to rest, improving morale, and allowing for education and cohesion. Sanctuary also allows for medical and logistic support, as well as training for the opposition force.

In the case of Algeria, the French were extremely adept at securing the country's borders to deny insurgents sanctuary, to minimize the influx and influence of unwanted external actors, and to sap the strength of the insurgent infrastructure. However, counterinsurgents failed in this effort in Vietnam and El Salvador, as well as in the ongoing cases of Jammu and Kashmir and Colombia. This failure has allowed insurgents to maintain the strategic initiative and recuperate mentally and physically in their sanctuaries when they feel threatened by the counterinsurgents.<sup>19</sup>

Opposition groups in Jammu and Kashmir "... continue to enjoy sanctuary in Pakistan. With the help of the [Inter-Services Intelligence], the insurgents are able to rearm, train new recruits, and then redeploy into [Jammu and Kashmir]."<sup>20</sup>

The final strategic condition is culture. Culture includes social structure, national or tribal history, religion, and ethnic diversity or similarity of groups. All of these must be understood for the fragile state and how these drive the relations between states in the region. Steven Metz notes that "Counterinsurgency is always about more than political grievances. Its causes – and solutions – lie deep within a failing culture."<sup>21</sup> When considering fragile states such as Afghanistan, the implications of this concept are enormous – are we prepared to plan the modernization and globalization of this fragile state while developing a government and its security forces and fighting an insurgency?

Many conflicts have deep historical roots, as seen in places like Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh and with groups such as the Kurds and the Pashtuns. Operations in locations like "... the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq have, in some cases, been triggered by and, in all cases, been strongly influenced by serious ethnic and religious differences."<sup>22</sup> Understanding the cultural environment which you are entering will facilitate strategic framing.

These strategic conditions, derived from Galula, Kilcullen and Metz are the beginning of what must be considered for strategic framing. These strategic conditions also establish conditions which facilitate external support.

*External Support Factors which must be taken into Account.* Galula's concept of "Outside Support"<sup>23</sup> is significant in framing stability operations. His concept identifies moral, political, technical, financial, and military support from outside the fragile state as beneficial to insurgents. External support must be viewed from two perspectives: undesired and desired external support for the fragile state. The first perspective is focused on reducing or preventing undesired external support to opposition groups inside the fragile state. This is an *effort* to protect the fragile nation (to the greatest degree possible) from undesirable external influence of the institutions or external support to opposition groups inside the fragile state. In strategic framing, the threat is from outside nations such as North Korea or Iran, bordering states desiring to control a fragile state such as Pakistan to Afghanistan, or any entity which the U.S. Government does not want operating in the fragile state such as al Qaeda. In all areas of external support this is, of course, easier said than done.

The other perspective of external support is building the desired external support from allies, coalition partners, and non-governmental organizations – those entities that the U.S. Government desires to operate in the area. Building desirable external support for the fragile state at the early in the development of the operation, starting with diplomatic relations, establishes legitimacy and support for the fragile state and the operation. The purpose is to build international support for the fragile state, its population, and its future development. Efforts to build-up, to reduce or to control external support to the fragile state can conceptually be organized along Galula's idea of outside support.

External moral support is "...expressed by the weight of public opinion and through various communications media."<sup>24</sup> Today this moral support can come from governments of other nations or a diaspora through supportive media outlets. It can come from information operations conducted by opposition groups which provide additional information to build popular support for their cause. In today's globalized world it can also come from individuals and small minorities around the world through computer access to web pages and sites that provide moral support and conduct fundraising.

External political support includes diplomatic relations with nations as well as international organizations. During the Cold War this included support from a super power nation such as the Soviet Union or the U.S. but today it could include relations with a strong regional power, such as China, Iran, or Russia. Political support will lead to the other types of external support. In El Salvador five separate organizations were operating against the government. In providing external support, Fidel Castro

understood the need for streamlining and unity of effort. He held negotiations to consolidate the five groups because he "... sought to consolidate training and logistical support."<sup>25</sup> Nations have the ability to provide funding, weapons and advice or bring in other players into the picture, just as the U.S. attempts to do. A diaspora, which links external support with the population aspect of geographic factors above, is generally politically oriented and can provide moral, political and financial support.

External technical support, in Galula's time, was advice on organizing the movement and conducting operations. Supportive governments can give advice by putting personnel on the ground to directly advise key people or by using complex communications systems, advising from the other side of the world. Today we in Iraq and Afghanistan see this as the coalition and NATO forces advise the governments and conduct Security Force Assistance to develop both military and police to improve security in those two fragile states. This external support can also include technical advice on conducting or preventing network attacks or information operations. It can include technical support as we think of it today, on highly sophisticated systems such as satellite or missile systems.

Financial support keeps insurgency and guerrilla movements alive in a fragile state, allowing acquisition of food, weapons, ammunition, and training. While some funding is derived from black market or criminal operations internal to the fragile state, funding can also come from such external sources as

...sympathetic foreign governments, diaspora groups and individuals. Such funding streams may be simple and direct or complex and masked dependent on the efforts being taken internationally to interdict them. In extreme cases, funding may be channeled through a third party organization purportedly conducting charitable work.<sup>26</sup>

Military support includes supplying weapons, training, advisors or direct intervention, all of which we have seen, from the desirable U.S. perspective, from U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. From the undesirable perspective, opposition groups may develop multiple sources of external support. In El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí Nacional Liberation Front (FMLN) was not dependent on one source for logistic support such as weapons. According to Lawrence Whelan, the FMLN "...received assault rifles from Vietnam, Cuba, East Germany and Hungary."<sup>27</sup> Multiple sources minimized policy changes from external supporters. North Korea became the main supplier of arms when Eastern Europe stopped supplying arms after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

External supporters may provide multiple types of external support, as we see in the case of Cuba supporting the FMLN where it provided moral, political, technical and military support. Any form of external support will probably be difficult to identify, and identifying the supporters will be more difficult. It will certainly be even more difficult to persuade them to end the external support.

Strategic conditions and external support are factors which strategic framing must address to build a strategic framework around the fragile state. Controlling – or failing to control - these factors through the instruments of power can create the conditions for success for either side, regardless of the event (war, crisis, or conflict), the location (state or region) or groups involved (ethnic, religious or ideological). Therefore the state which best controls these factors can set the conditions for stability success. If these strategic framing factors are not properly implemented at the strategic level using a comprehensive approach<sup>28</sup> described in FM 3-07 as well as with a whole-

of-government effort, the potential for failure of the stability operations increases; however, proper framing and execution do not guarantee success, due to the significant number of variables internal to the fragile state.

#### Controlling the Strategic Factors to enable Strategic Framing

Controlling the strategic factors listed above is what strategic framing attempts to do. It must precede or be done in parallel planning with a stability operation. It starts with the instruments of national power including Diplomacy, Informational, Military (Security), Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement - DIMEFIL - but more is needed. FM 3-07, *Stability Operations*, notes that development is a key aspect of stability operations. Controlling the strategic factors through these instruments requires coordination with nations external to the fragile state for successful implementation.

*Diplomacy.* Diplomacy plays the most significant role in strategic framing, because it is the basis for relations between all nations, supporting and opposing. It is also one of the few instruments of power which applies to all the strategic factors. Diplomacy begins with the executive branch determining policy toward the fragile state and the nations which play a positive or negative role in a stability operation. "Policy makers must therefore take into account regional and global dynamics as well as the internal situation of the nation most directly affected."<sup>29</sup> The Department of State opens relations with all the state and leads the diplomatic engagements, but is closely supported by the other executive departments to implement the policy. These discussions will certainly not include all non-governmental organizations since some will still operate in the fragile state without associating themselves with the coalition, but it

must include inter-governmental organizations such as the United Nations and regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Special attention must go to those nations surrounding the fragile state, friend and foe since their proximity can have a significant impact on our policy and operation.

Diplomacy lays the groundwork for attempting to control the strategic factors. There are no easy answers to long-standing border and population issues including ethnic or religious groups split by borders. In Afghanistan we have basically set aside the issue of defining the specific border between Afghanistan and Pakistan by using imprecise terms such as “approximate border” and “border area” in an effort to get to the more important issue of attempting to stop Taliban movement between the two nations. In Pakistan, government officials understand that military action must work with political action to solve the militant Islamic insurgency in the Federally Administered Tribal Area, which currently provides sanctuary to the Taliban operating in Afghanistan. "There is no such thing as a military solution. It has to be a political solution," Major-General Tariq Khan said.<sup>30</sup> The diplomacy of the coalition should develop forums which enable discussion by all sides to bring issues and problems to the table for discussion. Once the problems are identified they can be separated into smaller, more focused groups which can begin identifying frameworks to solve the issue. This is a long term approach required to solve a long term problem. The effort of strategic framing may simply be to prevent the border or population issue from becoming larger, protecting a stability operation from adverse impact while the long term solution continues development.



A diaspora, due to its ability to provide multiple types of external support, must be approached through diplomatic relations with the nations containing the population. Providing incentives – diplomatic agreements, economic assistance focused on these groups, cooperation on specific issues - designed to reduce or eliminate moral, political and financial support to opposition groups.

Diplomatic discussions should focus on desirable nations that have the capability to provide essential services and determine which non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations have interest in supporting the fragile state. Those with the capabilities should be designated to provide the specific services. Reaching an agreement on which partners provide essential services is an important part of developing and coordinating external support to the population of the fragile state.

These decisions on support must include preparation and coordination for humanitarian assistance. This must also be addressed in order to gain support and designate roles for coalition partners and non-governmental organizations external to the fragile state. The issue of displaced persons requires coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in planning and preparing for movements inside and outside of the fragile state. Diplomats can also coordinate with neighboring nations to handle the displaced population by providing aid and assistance to neighboring nations unable to deal with large movements. The agreements must also include repatriation as the fragile nation begins recovery. This action reduces potential for friction or conflict with neighboring states concerned about refugees, reducing the potential for external states to have a reason to take any adverse action.

The diplomatic efforts of the coalition must also address any potential sanctuary. The U.S. (among others) used Pakistan as sanctuary to support the development and training of the mujahedin fighters against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In the preparation for Operation Enduring Freedom the U.S. failed to understand Pakistan's political and security reasons for supporting the Taliban. The Taliban provided Pakistan strategic depth into Afghanistan to protect Pakistan from their perceived existential threat of Indian attack. To gain access to Afghanistan through Pakistan, the U.S. used heavy handed diplomacy to force an agreement. Instead U.S. policy forced Pakistan into a position they could not maintain - an agreement between the U.S. and Pakistan to destroy both al Qaida and the Taliban. In return, the U.S. provided funds without specifying how they were spent, for access and basing. We expected that as an "ally in the War on Terror" Pakistan would not support a force fighting against us, even though maintaining that force was in the strategic interests of Pakistan. Strategically framing Afghanistan should have included cultural and political understanding of Pakistan's strategic objectives, not just our pain from the 9/11 attacks. Diplomatic discussions needed specifics to end Pakistani support to the Taliban and its sanctuary, not just al Qaida. Rather than agreeing to destroy the Taliban, the next step should have been an agreement to allow the U.S. to operate with Pakistan in the Federally Administered Tribal Area against al Qaida and the Taliban. A long-term agreement to support Pakistan could have benefitted both sides, assuring the Pakistanis that we would not leave as we did after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Using diplomacy to control external support, to the greatest degree possible, helps reduce or prevent unwanted influence on the fragile state, while building desirable external support for political, economic support and trading partners for the fragile state. El Salvador illustrates several points in the diplomatic arena. While the counter-insurgency was eventually successful there, it was a long struggle of more than ten years, with both sides pouring external support into El Salvador. Involvement of the United Nations, with Spain as the lead nation, replaced the U.S. Soviet competition, bringing a negotiated end to the conflict. Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba could have led to negotiations to prevent or limit the external technical support which brought about the consolidation of the FMLN. Minimizing the external military support through a strategic framework would have been beneficial to El Salvador and the U.S. Agreements could have included diplomatic recognition or economic aid, though it would have required a shift in U.S. policy. Next, it demonstrates the flexibility insurgent groups and those that oppose our policies, requiring more significant efforts throughout the interagency to provide intelligence on political and cultural relations to support the policy. Had we strategically framed the conflict in El Salvador, it would have at least reduced outside support from Castro and others, reducing the length of the conflict and the suffering for all involved.

Positive diplomatic relations with the fragile state's neighbors can lead to multilateral support during the stability operations phase, ensuring wider support and increasing chances of success.<sup>31</sup> Establishing these relations starts with the U.S. policy and determining the benefits desired by those nations. Agreements to provide aid, economic assistance, commercial support, can establish relations which benefit the

U.S., the fragile state, the neighboring states and regional stability while they provide the basis to frame and operation. Building this desirable external support designates coalition partners that are able to prepare international financial assistance,<sup>32</sup> establish and facilitate trade<sup>33</sup> with other desirable multinational partners and neighboring nations, and establishes external support for customs enforcement and border security in the fragile state.

Diplomacy will directly influence external support from allies and coalition partners while controlling or reducing unwanted outside support. Diplomatically approaching those nations which oppose policy in the fragile state, we must provide options to reduce or stop the external support to opposition groups by delegitimizing opposition with support from bodies such as the United Nations or regional organizations. James Baker demonstrated a herculean effort of political strategic framing during Operation Desert Shield as he conducted “shuttle diplomacy” to begin building the 34 nation coalition which executed Operation Desert Storm.

In Afghanistan, political efforts were made to designate coalition leaders responsible for specific areas for stability operations after defeating the Taliban. However, the U.S. does not have direct diplomatic relations with Iran, which has diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and a 936 km border.<sup>34</sup> It is very difficult to set the conditions for stability operations; it is even more difficult when you have no relations with key states such as Iran which impacts operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

The framework for Afghanistan quickly fell apart as the focus shifted to Iraq. Cobra II, in discussing the preparation for stability operations in Iraq, does not mention any strategic decision to set a strategic framework for stability operations. LTG (Ret)

Jay Garner was tapped three months before the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom to begin post-conflict planning.<sup>35</sup> His focus was on U.S. efforts instead of a comprehensive approach, however the world-wide political conditions prior to Iraq and time available prevented any significant attempt to strategically frame Iraq.

*Informational.* The Informational instrument also applies to all the strategic factors. It is the means to provide large audiences an understanding of the strategic framing, providing information on the purpose and goals. Strategic communications and Information Operations must provide the moral support to stability operations. As noted by Dr. Kilcullen,

Without popular support, no democracy can sustain protracted irregular warfare against a diffuse enemy – so convincing populations of the threat is critical. This demands vastly increased, nuanced and effective strategic Information Operations: a non-trivial issue.<sup>36</sup>

Not only must it build support and political will for policy, it must also counter moral support to those opposing our policy. This requires strategic communications coordinated amongst the coalition partners and their embassies around the world especially in the region of strategic framing. The strategic themes must explain and support the reason for the operation. A comprehensive approach will combine coalition and U.S. strategic communications, which must be based on legitimacy. The leadership of the coalition, including presidents and prime ministers, and secretaries and ministers must aggressively send the message through press briefings, policy statements, and high visibility engagements between nations. “Active and continuous interaction with both local and international media groups can serve as a force multiplier. Keeping the population informed can only help to alleviate any alienation within it.”<sup>37</sup> Television and

radio programs as well as aggressive push of information on the World Wide Web will spread the understanding.

Messages and actions must address ideological, social, cultural, political, and religious motivations that influence or engender a sense of common interest and identity among the affected population and international stakeholders. They should also counter insurgents' ideology in order to undermine their motivation and deny them popular support and sanctuary (both physical and virtual).<sup>38</sup>

The U.S. Counterinsurgency Guide identifies two types of information – that which provides knowledge to the coalition and that which influences populations. Influencing populations is key to strategic framing of stability operations by providing information that shapes opinions. The audiences of this influencing information include the U.S. population, the fragile state, neighboring nations, coalition partners, and diaspora communities.<sup>39</sup> For the U.S. population, honest assessments of the situation, potential casualties and the consensus building provide the best opportunity to gain the support of the population. This will include gaining the support of congress. Building confidence in the in the fragile state is the fundamental aim of influence. At the same time, strategic communications and information operations must minimize the opposition's message, whether it is calling for support or (more likely) pointing out the flaws of the coalition. Neighboring nations of the fragile state are targeted to prevent external support and sanctuary. "Sanctuary may be giving willingly or may be beyond control of the government there. Even in non-democratic nations and ungoverned spaces, there may be merit in efforts to influence populations in these areas."<sup>40</sup> Strategic communications helps build the political resolve of Coalition Nations. The resolve of coalition nations will vary based on public support and the perceived benefits of participation. The benefits can include the legitimacy gained from participating in a

mission sanctioned by the United Nations or a regional organization, which bring credit to the nation on the world stage. Diaspora communities

...play a significant role in supporting or opposing insurgencies. Positive influence here can pay dividends. Clean separation of messages to these various populations is rarely possible and a high degree of coordination is required to allow messages to be tailored to different audiences without contradiction. The influence strategy must cascade down from a set of strategic narratives from which all messages and actions should be derived. The narratives of the affected government and supporting nations will be different but complimentary.<sup>41</sup>

Strategic communications to an opposition diaspora must urge, at a minimum, to remain neutral, not providing support. This is because of its ability to provide multiple types of external support as well as aspects of the strategic conditions, such as sanctuary. The messages must clearly portray the legitimacy of the coalition's mission and identify the benefits of staying out of the conflict. The message of stability and development must assure the diaspora that the benefits of stability are for all groups in the fragile state. Additionally, the longer the operation continues the more suffering for the groups attached to the diaspora.

Information operations must also reach into very specific areas of sanctuary, including individual, virtual and mental sanctuaries. Information must reach inside "individual sanctuary" – one's home – to gain the support of that individual<sup>42</sup> as well as into "virtual sanctuary"<sup>43</sup>, found in cyberspace. Today's complex communications systems allow people to connect around the world from private homes or locations with internet access, accessing moral, technical and financial support. Minimizing or preventing this access presents a very difficult situation which can be addressed through the informational instrument by developing strategic messages to discourage tech-savvy supporters. The final and perhaps most difficult sanctuary is an individual's

mind<sup>44</sup>. Strategic Communications and Information Operations influence a person's thoughts by providing education and information which allow the people to think for themselves.

*Military / Security.* Military is more properly defined as "Security" and includes police functions and all security forces. This instrument of power applies to controlling elements of strategic conditions such as borders, population, sanctuary, and culture (as in understanding the area of operations) in the application of security. Diplomacy, conducted amongst senior military leaders, builds the capacity of the coalition as members provide required security forces and enabling forces. In the U.S. doctrine these, forces will have the military mission of establishing security for the fragile state's borders and its population. In the UK approach, establishing security takes a more civil-oriented approach, using more police to secure the population. The forces work also, within the limits of policy, to eliminate sanctuary.

This instrument of power also applies to elements of external support including moral, technical, and military. Developing a strong military coalition, capable of conducting successful operations will significantly impact moral support for opposition groups. Technical support can be enhanced or reduced through military diplomacy. In El Salvador, U.S. military and technical support produced "... a train and equip program run by the United States helped retrain the Salvadoran Army to fight the insurgency, although direct U.S. involvement was kept to a minimum."<sup>45</sup> Another option is direct military involvement or combination of these as in Iraq and Afghanistan with Security Force Assistance missions. All of this requires external coordination and development at the strategic level to strategically frame the fragile state. However,



“Military success, regardless of how extensive, can never defeat an insurgency. Indian soldiers, as part of their indoctrination into COIN operations in the state, are told that the insurgency will end only when an effective political solution is developed and adopted; military action alone is not enough. Until that time, the violence ... can only be *managed* by security forces.”<sup>46</sup>

*Economic.* Protecting, maintaining or building the capability to reestablish the economy during stability operations is key to the future success of the nation. The Joint Operating Concept for stability operations notes that one of the six imperatives is, “The ability to assist in the early recovery of local and national economic activity and lay the foundation for sustained economic growth.”<sup>47</sup> Building desirable external support for the fragile state’s economy requires identifying those allies, coalition members, and gaining support from the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. These key players bring economic knowledge and the ability to implement programs to develop economic policies and systems for the fragile state. Coalition partners must anticipate the needs of the fragile state and implement economic programs to provide economic stability, job programs and income for the people. In Iraq multiple NATO nations were willing to do business with Iraqis and coalition partners to provide goods such as bottled water. The coalition partners will also need to protect the fragile state’s economy from economic shocks as it begins to operate in the globalized economic system. This protection could include helping to operate the economic system until it can stand on its own, education on economic policies or developing a program to assist in currency valuation.

*Finance.* The development of a financial system in the fragile state is built, initially, through diplomatic agreements with those players the U.S. or the coalition wants to support the fragile state. This will be followed by organizations such as our

Department of Commerce, the ministries of finance for various coalition partners and the World Trade Organization developing or rebuilding the financial sector. These experts bring financial policies for banking, credit, and currency controlled by a legitimate government which can help get the financial sector operating. These experts will also assist in developing desirable external, multilateral commerce system for the fragile state with the financial system operations which could include markets, transportation of goods, providing services as well as debt forgiveness and loans to start the system and keep it moving.

Strategic framing must also include protecting the fragile state's commerce systems and prevent undesirable outside influence. This is aimed at those states which oppose the policy of the coalition.

*Intelligence.* Intelligence covers the spectrum of the strategic framing factors. Providing an intimate understanding of the external factors to the executive departments and the Combatant Commander is key to success. This intelligence will come from U.S. Embassies in the region, including, if possible, the U.S. Embassy in the fragile state. Intelligence must identify critical strategic conditions which can put the operation at risk. Porous borders and potential sanctuaries, supportive ethnic or religious groups and groups in opposition, diasporas and their locations, and potential displaced persons are key to framing the stability operation. Identifying governments and entities which may provide external support and the methods to provide this support are critical.

*Law Enforcement.* The instrument of Law Enforcement applies to border control, security of the population in conjunction with the military and police forces, economy, preventing sanctuary all with the understanding of the culture. It also applies to financial

external support. In strategic framing, leaders such as the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the U.S. must build coalition support for nations to provide forces which can provide security while denying opposition groups the benefits of black markets, international drug trade and international organized crime.

International borders require control through customs and security as this will become a source of revenue for the nation's government. International "... illicit financial activities diminish government revenues, increase corruption among local officials, and weaken the control and legitimacy of the government."<sup>48</sup>

*Development.* While not an instrument of power, development is a capacity which a whole of government process should coordinate in conjunction with coalition partners and non-governmental organizations, based on the priorities established by local authorities and the government of the fragile state. Development programs coordinated during the planning phase and conducted by all coalition partners and non-governmental organizations must provide services at least to the previous level. Development includes infrastructure such as transportation systems and power grids, and institutions for educational systems, political processes, and civil society which provides for the long-term success of the nation. Strategic framing with regard to development requires the U.S. to approach coalition partners to allocate the tasks among partners, dividing the level of work in an effort to make it more manageable.

Recently, 15 Corps of the Indian Army launched an expensive and ambitious project, *Operation Sadbhavana*. The brainchild of Lieutenant General Arjun Ray, it was a large-scale venture aimed at improving life for the civilians of Ladakh in [Jammu & Kashmir]. With an initial cost of close to \$1 million, the plan called for constructing schools, hospitals, and community development centers and providing water and electricity. The project also included tours for locals to different parts of the country and

the improvement of roads and bridges across the state. The project was widely acclaimed and declared a success.

It is important to note that these civic actions were conducted on a significant scale and in a transparent, genuine manner. The government determined that worthwhile facilities for the population had to be properly planned and initiated, with proper follow-through to start winning hearts and minds. A clear and visible difference in the lives of the locals was also needed if they were to begin trusting security personnel. Otherwise, the feelings of alienation would foster further anti-Indian sentiment.<sup>49</sup>

Controlling the strategic factors of the previous section by applying these instruments of power requires a comprehensive approach with allies, partners and other nations external to the fragile state for successful implementation. It also requires compromising opposition efforts to stop the coalition policy though efforts to at least minimize and at best prevent unwanted external influence. Is isolation of a fragile state possible or wise? Total isolation of the fragile state is not possible today given globalization and integration. However it would be wise because the longer the fragile state can be protected from unwanted or undesirable external influences the stronger its institutions of government and society will become. So, to the greatest degree possible for the longest amount of time possible - knowing it will not be as much as desired – protect the fragile state to allow the development of institutions inside the fragile state. To a large degree we were successful in isolating Iraq during Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990/91. It required strategic thinking to diplomatically develop a framework within which coalition partners supported the isolation. Today it is more difficult due to globalization and complex communications systems. Does that mean we should not attempt to set conditions which facilitate stability operations?

## Conclusion

Strategic framing is critical for stability operations and conflict termination to successfully reach the strategic objectives as soon as possible. Strategic framing focuses on completing the war and setting the conditions for the peace through a comprehensive approach with partner nations and inter-agency coordination of multiple programs external to the fragile state. This is the essence of Strategic Framing. However, this is certainly not to say that it will be easy to do. We will continue to struggle with building support for a fragile state in the international arena from allies and partners. Many of the strategic factors are interconnected and spillover into multiple areas of the instruments of power, complicating efforts to control the factors.

States coming out of war or crisis have undergone traumatic experiences and are open to external political influence in the form of competing ideologies and political players as well as military influence including guerrilla operations, insurgency, or civil war. Strategic framing of a stability operation sets the conditions for success by controlling, to the greatest degree possible, the strategic factors for positive development of political, economic, and social systems, and developing infrastructure while strategically setting security conditions which help prevent insurgency, terrorism, and civil war.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Stability Operations*, Field Manual 3-07 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, October 6, 2008), 1-9. FM 3-07 defines fragile states: "A *fragile state* is a country that suffers from institutional weaknesses serious enough to threaten the stability of the central government."

<sup>2</sup> Bryan Bender, "Ex-Commander: US Needs New China Plan, Fallon details strategy clashes with Bush Hawks," *The Boston Globe*, November 26, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Angel Rabasa et al., *Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations* (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation 2007), 30.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept* (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 2006), 10.

<sup>5</sup> David Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency, A Strategy for the War on Terrorism," *Small Wars Journal*, November 2004, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/kilcullen.pdf> (accessed 10 February, 2009), 34.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Stability Operations*, Field Manual 3-07, 1-10.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 12 2001, As Amended Through August 26 2008), 515.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Stability Operations*, Field Manual 3-07, 1-15.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, January 28 2008), 10.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept*, 22.

<sup>11</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 2005), 35.

<sup>12</sup> Rabasa et al., *Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*, 57.

<sup>13</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice*, 36.

<sup>14</sup> Rabasa et al., *Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II, The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 467.

<sup>17</sup> Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency, A Strategy for the War on Terrorism", 34.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, January, 2009), 9.

<sup>19</sup> Rabasa et al., *Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*, xv.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 57

<sup>21</sup> Steven Metz, "Three Years and You're Out," *The National Interest*, (January/February 2008): 57.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence J. Whelan, "Weapons of the FMLN-Part Two: The Logistics of an Insurgency," <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.military.moderated/2005-01/0005.html> (accessed December 13, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Whelan, "Weapons of the FMLN-Part Two: The Logistics of an Insurgency".

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Stability Operations*, Field Manual 3-07, 1-5.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Mian Khursheed, "Pakistan says wins key region on Afghan border" *Reuters*, February 28, 2009 <http://uk.reuters.com/article/burningIssues/idUKTRE51R0OE20090228?sp=true> (accessed February 28, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II, The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 504.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Post Conflict Reconstruction Essentials Tasks Matrix* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization), 14 <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/rls/52959.htm> (accessed October 1, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Post Conflict Reconstruction Essentials Tasks Matrix*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed March 1, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II, The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 149.

<sup>36</sup> Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency, A Strategy for the War on Terrorism", 40.

<sup>37</sup> Rabasa et al., *Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*, 56.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> The concept of “individual sanctuary” was presented to the author by Professor Richard Smyth of the Peacekeeping Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), U.S. Army War College, during a discussion of strategic framing of stability operations in fall 2008.

<sup>43</sup> The concept of “cyber sanctuary” was presented to me by Professor William Flavin of the Peacekeeping Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), U.S. Army War College, during a discussion of strategic framing of stability operations in winter 2009.

<sup>44</sup> The concept of sanctuary being in an individual’s mind was presented to me by Professor William Flavin of the Peacekeeping Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), U.S. Army War College, during a discussion of strategic framing of stability operations in winter 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Rabasa et al., *Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*, xii.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 57

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept*, viii

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Angel Rabasa et al., *Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*, 56.